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and on the exact site of the crime. Moreover, the same number of knots was tied in the handkerchief used by the avenger as had been tied in the handkerchief used by the original murderer.

On another occasion the train in which I was travelling stopped close to a certain village in Middle Egypt. I noticed that the place was in great commotion; crowds of people had collected in the streets, and there were two or three motors drawn up, evidently belonging to Government officials. In a palm-grove opposite the village were groups of people, mostly women, seated round objects covered up with black cloaks such as are often worn by the men. Presently my servant came to the door of my carriage to tell me what was the matter. His information, collected from various persons on the spot, was practically the same as what I was told later by the officials themselves. It seems that in the village in question there is a long-standing feud between two families, one of which is weak, the other strong. About eight months previously the strong family had fought with the weaker one, and had either killed or severely wounded—I forget which—some of its members. The weak family was not in a position to take immediate revenge, but bided its time, determining to retaliate sooner or later. During the night before my visit fifteen members of the more powerful family had been out in their fields, as water had been turned on for irrigation purposes. It is always necessary on these occasions to see that the water is conducted into the proper channels, and also that no one steals it by altering its course. The men thus employed were widely separated from each other, and during their watch they all fell asleep. The weaker family knew that this might well happen and so give them the long-desired opportunity of taking their revenge. A number of them, therefore, set off from the village at night, and, creeping up to their sleeping enemies, beat them so severely with *nabābīt* that those they did not kill outright they injured so terribly that they were not expected to live—I never heard definitely how many actually were killed, though one rumour, happily an exaggeration, I believe, put the number as high as twelve.

The law of blood-revenge is one of the greatest obstacles to justice with which the police officials have to contend. It is most difficult to obtain evidence, because the witnesses know that, should what they say result in a criminal's conviction, his relatives will certainly take revenge. It is not to be wondered at, therefore, that

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criminals sometimes escape punishment, in spite of the skill and patience displayed by many of the officials in unravelling the mass of conflicting evidence. To this skill and patience I can myself testify, and also to the obstinate refusal of witnesses to give any incriminating evidence, for I have been present over and over again at criminal investigations.

However, we must not pass too harsh a judgment on the attempts of the villagers to frustrate the aims of justice. Even in England people would hesitate to assist the law if it were known that to give evidence against even the most depraved criminal meant almost certain death at the hands of the avengers. Foreigners who have little or no knowledge of the customs prevailing among the peasants are inclined to be too severe in their criticism of the Egyptian officials when they fail to obtain sufficient evidence to convict almost undoubted criminals. But English officials who have lived in the provinces of Egypt and in close contact with the people realize how difficult a matter this is. To my mind the wonder is not the number of crimes that go unpunished for lack of evidence, but the number of criminals whose crimes are detected and who are brought to justice.

181 and mistrust. He puts up with the cruellest treatment from them, and they, despising him as they do, whether they be Egyptians or foreigners, believe that such methods are a necessity.

181 565 694 A rich landowner of my acquaintance, an excellent fellow at heart, declared: 'The fellaheen must be driven with the lash.' A *mudeer* of the police who, as I entered his office, was raining blows on a man up for trial replied to my expression of astonishment: 'This is how you have to treat them. They are beasts.'

369 So great is the cleavage between town and country, between the still uncivilised fellah and the more or less Westernised townsman, that the gulf is neither narrow nor recent. In a private letter written three centuries before Christ these words are found: 'Do not take me for an Egyptian fellah.' Then as now the representatives of the town appeared in the village only to take their rents, or to levy the taxes due to the State [19].

121 We are not for the moment discussing the fellah's psychology; but it must be said in conclusion to this chapter that although he is much sought after as a taxpayer or producer he is still unknown as a man and neglected as a citizen.

565 The political and economic pyramid of Egypt bears down with all its weight on the fellah. The oligarchy at the top may have changed its form, but pressure at the base, that is on the fellah, has been little relieved.

His ignorance, his isolation, his bondage to the soil, prevent him from putting up any resistance to this crushing burden; and it is a burden which moulds his whole life.